

VZCZCXYZ0001
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHVI #1623/01 3091459
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 041459Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1278
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC
RHEHOND/DIRONDCP WASHDC

UNCLAS VIENNA 001623

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INL AND EUR/AGS
STATE PLEASE PASS TO JOHN LYLE/INL AAE
JUSTICE FOR OAI, AFMLS, AND NDDES

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [AU](#)
SUBJECT: AUSTRIA: 2008 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL
STRATEGY REPORT (INCSR)

REF: STATE 100992

RESPONSES BELOW ARE KEYED TO REFTEL INSTRUCTIONS:

NOTE: THE INCSR'S MONEY LAUNDERING SECTION WILL BE SENT
SEPTTEL.

I. Summary

11. (U) Austria is primarily a transit country for illicit drugs; it is not a drug producing country. Experts see no change in the usual strategies of illegal trade of narcotic substances in 2008, except for precursor substances, where since 2007 Austria has begun to serve as a depot country for interim storage. Foreign criminal groups from former Soviet-bloc countries, Turkey, West Africa, and Central and South America, dominate the organized drug trafficking scene in the country. Austria's geographic location along major trans-European drug routes allows criminal groups to bring drugs into the country. Production, cultivation, and trafficking by Austrian nationals remain insignificant. Drug consumption in Austria is well below average west European levels and authorities do not consider it to be a severe problem. However, there is a trend toward more high-risk drugs. The number of drug users is currently estimated at around 35,000. The number of drug-related deaths has gone down recently (2007). Cooperation with U.S. authorities continued to be excellent during 2008. International cooperation led to significant seizures, frequently involving multiple countries.

12. (U) In 2008, Austria continued its efforts to intensify regional police cooperation, particularly with regard to the Balkans. Austria also continued its year-long focus on providing policing know-how to countries in Central Asia. Austria is the seat of the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and has been a major donor for several years. Austria has been a party to the 1971 and 1988 UN drug conventions since 1997. End Summary.

II. Status of Country

13. (U) There was no significant increase in the number of drug users in Austria during the period January-October 12008. Austria's National Drug Coordinator estimates the number of total drug abusers at around 35,000. The number of users of MDMA (Ecstasy) remained largely stable in 2008. Austria counted 175 drug-related deaths in 2007 and expects a similar, low figure for 2008 - a downward trend compared to the previous three years. However, the

number of deaths from mixed intoxication continues to rise as drug users consume more high-risk substances. According to police records, total violations of the Austrian Narcotics Act increased marginally in 2007 and 2008. The latest prosecution statistics (for 2007) show 24,166 charges, a rise of 1.05 percent from the previous year's total. Of these charges 1,236 involved psychotropic substances and 22,929 involved narcotic drugs. One offense involved precursors. Ninety percent of the charges were misdemeanors. Amphetamines and derivatives ("Ecstasy" pills) are predominantly smuggled in from the Netherlands via Germany, whereby Austria increasingly serves also as a transit country for onward smuggling to Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Usage of amphetamines rose 114 percent from 2007 to 2008, tracking a Europe-wide trend as these substances are increasingly available outside of urban areas.

14. (U) According to a 2005 survey commissioned by the Health Ministry, approximately one-fifth of respondents admitted to consumption of an illegal substance at some time during their lives. Most respondents cited cannabis, with "Ecstasy" and amphetamines in second and third place respectively. Among young adults (ages 19-29), about 30 percent admitted "some experience" with cannabis at least once in their lifetime. According to the study, 2-4 percent of this age group had already used cocaine, amphetamines, and "Ecstasy," while 3 percent had experience with biogenetic drugs.

III. Country Action Against Drugs in 2008

15. (U) Policy Initiatives: Throughout 2008, the Austrian government retained its no tolerance policy regarding drug traffickers and its traditional "therapy before punishment" policy for non-dealing offenders. The government introduced legislation in 2007 for better data quality of drug users. According to critics, this would restrict prescriptions and infringe on patient privacy rights through increased surveillance of medical narcotics users. Legislation is expected to be passed by the end of 2008. Certain types of surveillance of illegal drug behavior are already possible under a 2005 amendment allowing the set up of cameras in high-crime public areas. Critics argue that this only moves the drug scene to other areas. The 2005 law also provided for the establishment of a "protection zone" around schools and retirement centers from which police may ban suspected drug dealers for up to thirty days. Austrian authorities continue to demand stricter regulations on an EU-wide scale regarding internet trade of illegal substances. At the end of 2008, drug experts were debating a possible ban of the "fashion drug" commonly called "Spice."

16. (U) During its latest EU presidency (January-July 2006), Austria initiated the EU's "Partnership for Security," with over fifty countries and organizations, including the U.S. and Russia, as participants. It reflects Austria's strong, year-long focus on the Balkans. One element of this strategy is the "Police Cooperation Convention for Southeastern Europe," which Austria co-signed. In 2007, Austria headed a follow-up conference entitled "Drug Policing Balkans," during which high-level officials, including Embassy Vienna's DEA representative, discussed operational aspects with respect to drug smuggling along the Balkans route. Austria also participated in a pertinent follow-up meeting in Zadar in 2008.

17. (U) At the EU level, the GOA continues to push for a European Narcotics Institute (European Drug Academy) styled along the lines of the U.S. NIDA. Austria remains critical of the EU Drug Action Plan however, saying it contains no evaluation of harm reduction measures. Throughout 2008, Austria maintained its lead role within the Central Asian Border Security Initiative (CABSI) and the Vienna Initiative on Central Asia (VICA), and

participated in conferences in Astana and Dushanbe. Vienna is the seat of the UN's drug assistance agency, the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Austria contributed EUR 550,000 (\$709,000) to this organization in 2008. In past years, Austria has been working with the UNODC, the EU, and Iran to establish border control checkpoints along the Afghan-Iranian border in order to prevent drug trafficking, particularly in opiates. Within the UNODC, Austria also participates in crop monitoring and alternative development plans in Peru, Bolivia, Columbia, and Honduras. At an ECOWAS anti-drug trafficking conference in Cape Verde in October, Austria pledged 300,000 Euros for drug control for the ECOWAS region. Austria values the "vital role" played by foreign liaison officers accredited in Austria, as well as by the network of Austrian liaison personnel stationed in critical countries abroad.

8.(U) Law Enforcement Efforts: Comprehensive seizure statistics for 2007 (the latest available figures) show a strong increase in seizures of heroin (up 240 percent), "Ecstasy" (up 114 percent), and Cocaine (up 26 percent), and a decrease in seizures for various types of cannabis, LSD, and other amphetamines. Experts stress that the degree of purity and concentration of "Ecstasy," speed, and other illegal substances has become increasingly volatile, representing a growing risk factor. This is due, in large part, to the advanced technology used in drug laboratories. The labs use precursors, such as acetic anhydride and potassium permanganate, to produce illicit drugs. The 2007 drug report from the Interior Ministry states that Austria's Precursor Monitoring Unit dealt with 206 cases in relation to precursors and clandestine drug laboratories—representing a noticeable increase of 31 percent—compared to 157 cases in 2006. In 2007, one illegal drug laboratory was raided in Austria, producing an insignificant number of synthetic methamphetamines. The total street value of illicit drugs was higher in 2007 than during the previous years. One gram of cannabis sold for EUR 10.00 (\$14); one gram of heroin for EUR

85.00 (\$120); and one gram of cocaine for EUR 80.00 (\$112). Amphetamines sold for EUR 25.00 (\$35) per gram and one LSD trip for EUR 35.00 (\$49).

19. (U) Corruption: Austria has been a party to the OECD anti-bribery convention since 1999 and to the UN Corruption Convention since January 2006. The GOA's public corruption laws recognize and punish the abuse of power by a public official. An amendment which went into effect January 1, 2008 substantially increased penalties for bribery and abuse of office offenses. As of fall 2008, there were no corruption cases pending involving bribery of foreign public officials. In September 2008, a Vienna appellate court upheld a guilty verdict from 2007 involving a senior Vienna police official for minor bribery charges, which were not drug related. As a matter of government policy, the GOA does not encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. Austria ranks among the 12 least corrupt countries worldwide, according to the 2008 "Corruption Perception Index" compiled by the watch-dog NGO Transparency International.

10. (U) Agreements and Treaties: Austria is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and its 1972 Protocol, and the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances. Austria is a party to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol against Trafficking in Persons. An extradition treaty and mutual legal assistance treaty are in force between the U.S. and Austria.

11. (U) Cultivation: Production of illicit drugs in

Austria continued to be marginal in 2008. The Interior Ministry's annual report on drug-related crime noted a rise in private, indoor-grown, high-quality cannabis. Austria recorded no domestic cultivation of coca or opium in 2008.

¶12. (U) Drug Flow/Transit: The Interior Ministry's drug report stresses that Austria is not a source country for illicit drugs, but remains a transit country. According to the DEA's quarterly trafficking report (note: DEA will no longer provide Quarterly reports, only an annual Foreign Situation Report. end note), illicit drug trade by Austrian nationals is negligible. Foreign criminal groups (e.g. Turks, Serbs, Bosnians, Russians, Albanians, Bulgarians) carry out organized drug trafficking in Austria. The Balkan route into the country is a particularly difficult one to control. In addition to opiates, 90 percent of cocaine enters Austria by the Balkan Route. The illicit trade increasingly relies on Central and East European airports, including Vienna's Schwechat International Airport. A continuing trend in Austria is West African narcotics smugglers using Caucasian women from former Soviet-bloc countries to smuggle drugs into Austria. The GOA reports a noticeable increase in Austria's growing role as a transit country for "Ecstasy" coming from the Netherlands to the Balkans.

¶13. (U) Domestic Programs/Demand Reduction: Austrian authorities and the public generally view drug addiction as a disease rather than a crime. This is reflected in relatively liberal drug legislation and in court decisions. The government remains committed to measures to prevent the social marginalization of drug addicts. Federal guidelines ensure minimum quality standards for drug treatment facilities. The GOA's demand reduction program emphasizes primary prevention, drug treatment, counseling, and harm reduction measures, such as needle exchange programs. Ongoing challenges in demand reduction are the need for psychological care for drug victims and greater attention to older victims and immigrants. Primary intervention starts at the pre-school level and continues through secondary school, apprenticeship institutions, and out-of-school youth programs. The government and local authorities routinely sponsor educational campaigns both within and outside of the classroom. Overall, youths in danger of addiction are primary targets of new treatment and care policies. Austria has syringe exchange programs in place for HIV and hepatitis prevention. Hepatitis B and C is

commonplace among intravenous drug users at 59 percent. Policies toward greater diversification in substitution treatment (methadone, prolonged-action morphine, and buprenorphine) continued in 2008. Austria currently has approximately 10,000 people in rehabilitation programs. The government remains skeptical regarding heroin substitution programs however, arguing that there are better solutions.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

¶14. (U) Bilateral Cooperation: Cooperation between Austrian and U.S. authorities continued to be excellent in 2008. Several bilateral efforts exemplified this cooperation, including DEA support of Austria's Drug Policing Balkans initiative. Austrian Interior Ministry officials continued to consult the FBI, DEA, and DHS on how to update criminal investigation structures. The U.S. worked with Austria's Federal Crime Office (BKA) and its regional chapters on a multilateral investigation involving a Colombian violator in Vienna linked to a Colombian trafficking organization, who was trafficking cocaine loads from South America into Europe. Similarly, Airport Police at Austria's Schwechat airport worked jointly with DEA Vienna on the arrests of two couriers from New York charged with importing approximately 5 kilograms of cocaine into Austria. The cooperative investigation led to the identification of the

responsible organization. Also, leads passed from the Bangkok DEA office to Airport Police at Schwechat airport proved valuable with respect to drug seizures, arrests and intelligence sharing between agencies. Austrian national and regional crime fighting agencies facilitated interviews by U.S. prosecutors and DEA agents of defendants incarcerated in Austria on a huge cocaine importation case from 2005. The interviews were important for the larger, overall prosecution of the main, global criminal organization. DEA continued to work together with the BKA in support of important annual BKA/Croatia Balkan Drug Conference in Zadar, Croatia, which was held in September 2008. Furthermore, the U.S. Embassy regularly sponsors speaking tours for U.S. counternarcotics experts in Austria.

¶15. (U) The Road Ahead. The U.S. will continue to support Austrian efforts to create more effective tools for law enforcement. As in past years, the U.S. will work closely with Austria within the framework of U.S.-EU initiatives, the UN, and the OSCE. The U.S. priority will remain the promotion of a better understanding of U.S. drug policy among Austrian officials.

GIRARD-DICARLO